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# The Art Gallery

THE DUDLEY GALLERY.

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN EXHIBITS—MARK FISHER'S EXPERIENCE.



THE fifteenth winter exhibition at the Dudley Gallery, in London, opened on the twenty-ninth of last November. It contains about the usual number of pictures, some 400 in all, and presents the usual average of merit. No new bright light, foretelling the advent of genius, has appeared, and many acknowledged lights are conspicuous by their absence, yet still the exhibition holds its medium way as a fair representation of average English contemporary art. The small dimensions of the Dudley Gallery give it a certain power of selection and refinement not possessed by the Academy and Salon exhibitions, so that though much of the highest work of the country may not be submitted to its choice, it is enabled to throw out the raw coloring and crude drawing which degrade the larger exhibitions every spring. This gives it its averaging quality which is so generally recognized in English art circles.

The Dudley Gallery is one long room, scarcely larger than a handsome drawing-room. The floor is carpeted and a bright fire burns in an open stove. Sofas and stuffed chairs make the business of picture viewing easy, no picture hanging so far away from some comfortable seat that the visitor need stand to see it. The small catalogues have the price of each picture appended to the title, and the secretary of the society sits writing at his desk in the centre of the room, ready to receive the twenty-five per cent of each picture's price that must be paid down by its purchaser. Seldom more than a dozen or fifteen visitors are present at a time, and these move quietly about or chat in subdued tones upon the sofas, giving one the impression that it is a private gallery he is viewing and that these are the owner's guests.

The committee list of the Dudley Gallery is an imposing one, including such names as Alma-Tadema, Boughton, Walter Crane, Luke Fildes, Mark Fisher, Herkomer, MacWhirter, Stacy Marks, Val Prinsep, and Britton Riviere. Out of these artists, however, only Mark Fisher, MacWhirter and Val Prinsep appears as exhibitors. MacWhirter sends a "Bridge of Sighs," in which immense artistic and poetical license is taken in stretching out the perspective into such an imaginative vista as would bewilder Venetians who pace along the Via Schiavone every day. Val Prinsep sends an evident "pot boiler" in the shape of a portrait called "Rare Pale Margaret."

As a rule the names that appear in the Dudley catalogue represent aspirants rather than what the French call "les arrivés." But they represent the best of those aspirants, whose names will before long stand among the first of "les arrivés." Thus they have their own peculiar interest and importance. They show tendencies and are prophetic. As an observing writer says, it is fairest to compare them with the young continental painters. In minutely finished and dazzling genre work of course the young followers of Meissonier and Fortuny distance their English competitors, to whom such microscopic perfection seems impossible. Even in skill of pictorial composition the young English artist is less sure than the young Frenchman. The Englishman's technique is more labored and even visibly clumsy, where the Frenchman's seems almost spontaneously sure and dashing. But the Englishman's imagination is more refined and his labored technique is spared temptation to such manifestations of mere bravura vulgarity as are so conspicuous in every exhibition of French pictures.

Only three Americans among all our countrymen in London appear in the Dudley this year. These three are Mark Fisher, J. Alden Weir, and Howard Helmick. Mark Fisher sends a small canvas called "Haying Time," a low-lying landscape with a loaded hay-cart and a few rustic figures. It is rather sketchily turned off, with local color evidently subordinated and fused into tone. French influences show plainly in all Mr. Fisher's work, and his landscapes shun the yellow grass-greenness of England for the gray-blue greenness of France. His touch is so broad that distance becomes magical to one viewing his work, the forms which, seen too near, are absolutely unintelligible spatters of thick impasto solving themselves at the proper distance into the strong yet peculiarly subtle expressions for which this artist is so distinguished. We may well doubt the worth of the art culture and critical acumen of our own country when we have suffered such an artist as Mark Fisher to escape us, and to cast his genius with the artistic fortunes of England. Fisher was a Boston boy who loved his country well enough to be ambitious to win fame as an American in America. He had a struggling youth, and was glad to paint scenes and signs in Boston that he might earn time in which to paint pictures. But for the scenes and signs he would have starved to death; Boston showing no appreciation for the identical pictures since bought by English connoisseurs at ten times the price at which they were once offered, and went begging, in Boston shops and exhibitions. After years of struggle Mr. Fisher was fortunate enough to attract the attention of a wealthy gentleman who prided himself upon his intuitive recognition of genius. This gentleman lent Fisher the means to go to Paris for study, agreeing to receive payment in pictures for the money advanced. Fisher remained abroad several years, and then came back to his native city with hand trained to the splendid technique of the best French schools, and with taste cultivated and power directed by the best influences of European art. He returned to critical, æsthetic, cultured Boston, and to what? To neglect and contempt that made his blood boil. Nobody bought his pictures; they were even refused at exhibitions. Even his wealthy patron refused to take his payment in them, telling the artist that he had ruined his genius by running after strange gods! Fisher was obliged to offer some of his French pictures at raffles, by which means he gained enough to escape from a country which utterly lacked vision to recognize and honor one of the best of its own prophets. He brought with him to London the very pictures that had been scorned of cultured Boston. They were received and well hung in the London exhibitions, attracted the attention of the leading critics and sold for prices that would have made Boston gasp. Since then Mr. Fisher's fame has been steadily growing, and it is probable that before very long Boston may have the supreme pride of pointing to a Royal Academician not so very long ago denied entrance to its Art Club Exhibition.

Helmick sends a piece of character painting called "A Weather Prophet," a kitchen interior with an old man in high cap and rustic raiment holding a smoking pipe in his hand and looking wisely out upon the bit of cold gray sky beyond an open widow. It is strong enough in character, but without artistic or poetic beauty. It is somewhat flatly low-toned, its only salience of form being in the old man's head modelled against the kitchen wall with scarcely more than the elevation of a bas relief.

J. Alden Weir's "Portrait of a Young Girl," has a rather faded air, as if somewhat blasé to the charms of picture exhibitions. One may easily imagine having seen it in every annual exhibit since one's childhood, so flat and dull it seems with the monotony of its travelling life. It is painted with a "breadth" that utterly ignores drapery, leaving it only a flat silhouette space. The modelling of the face is softly vague, such as the French call "enveloppé," somewhat after the mode of

Henner, and it is misty of complexion and not impressively pretty. The costume is old-fashioned or rather passé. The picture is tepid in color, skied, and not likely to set the British mind working upon the prospects of transatlantic art.

MARGARET BERTHA WRIGHT.

## American Art Galleries.\*

XI.

COLLECTION OF JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

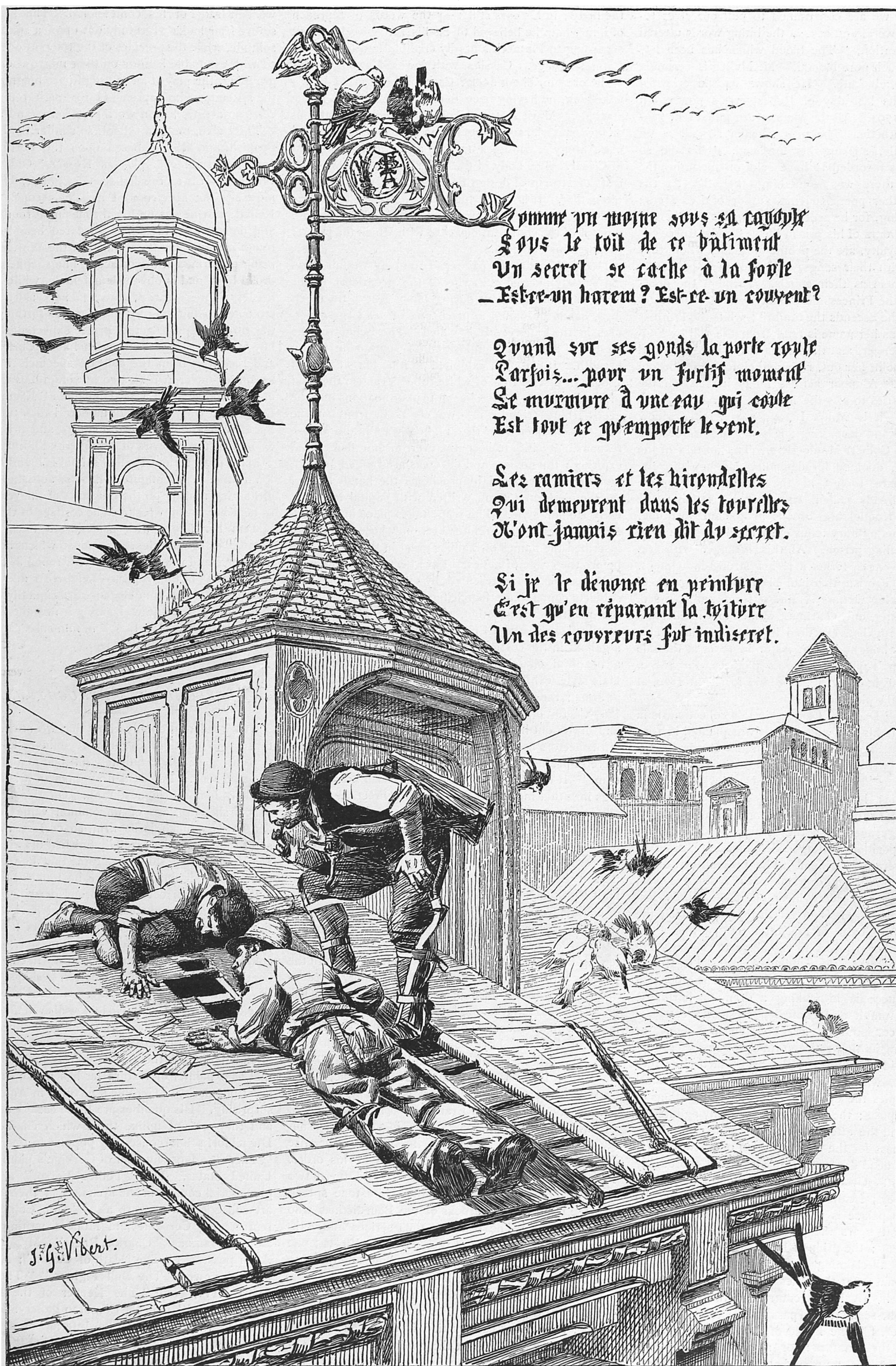
A GALLERY which contains such famous works as Muller's "Roll-Call of the Conciergerie," Gérôme's "Death of Cæsar," Jules Lefebvre's "Virginia," Meissonier's "Sur L'Escalier," Bonnat's "Non Piangere," and Zamacois' "Rival Confessors," must be admitted to show very good self-advisement in its selecting. The visitor, who might be excused for not expecting much more than a display of elegance and luxury, finds himself among pictorial thoughts and problems that are an education.

Bonnat shows his highest manner in the "Non Piangere!" It is a simple study of model-painting, as is the case with much of his better work, and the spectator feels that he is not to have his mind diverted by any considerations of subject-interest from the central intention, which is to represent human figures as well as they can be painted. Two of the infant Italian models from the Spanish Stairs in Rome are posturing before the artist in his studio. The little girl, overcome with terror at her first introduction, stiffens herself like a standing image and is about to cry; her small brother kneels and embraces her with his arms, lifting a finger to warn and reassure her. This trifling incident affords the artist a chance for one of his inexorable delineations of the figure, positive, solid, and real. A pupil of Bonnat has remarked that while other painters are able to model with the brush so that the work is the same thing as an alto-relief, Bonnat can model so consummately that you pass all the way around the objects. Indeed in the matter of solidity sculpture would have to yield very few points in a comparison with this work of painting, so perfectly reduced to planes of distance are all the forms. At the same time the character, and what there is of incident, are very cunningly seized on. The girl is positively burly with her pomp of toilet, so new and rigid are her flowery apron, her square tile of a head-napkin, and the frock that ensheathes her. It is quite evident that she has been dressed up for the first time as a theatrical contadina, by a family of professional models, while the youth who takes care of her is as obviously half-dressed and at ease; so it is natural enough that the rigid statue of etiquette should burst out crying and that the easy undressed lazzarone should be laughing.

Muller's "Roll-Call at the Conciergerie" is a large color-study for the striking composition which so many travellers have seen at the Luxembourg Gallery in Paris. There are two of these color-studies in America, this one in the Astor collection, and another in the Dousman Gallery at St. Louis, each claiming to be more authentic than the other. The St. Louis owner avers that the New York example was a copy made to order after the execution of the Luxembourg specimen, and largely achieved by pupils, which accounts for its superior finish. However that may be, it is an adequate repetition of the Paris subject so often admired. Since the installation of the present Republic the "Roll-Call" has been removed from the Luxembourg, though whether restored since my last advices I cannot now say. It seemed, indeed, too royalistic and feudal to be conspicuously placed in a governmental exhibition under republican rule. It is an elaborate effort to

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"THE ROOFERS." BY J. G. VIBERT. AN AQUARELLE IN THE COLLECTION OF W. H. VANDERBILT.

REPRODUCED FROM THE ARTIST'S ORIGINAL PEN-AND-INK DRAWING NOW IN THE POSSESSION OF S. P. AVERY.

conjure up pity for the proscribed legitimists of the French Revolution; but, after the picture has worked all its will, and left us almost in tears for the hard fate of feudalism, we are constrained to pull ourselves together, as it were, and ask, in the biting words uttered in the Convention, "The blood which has been let, was it then such pure blood?" M. Muller is certainly an eloquent advocate. He shows us the crowded prison, on the last day of Robespierre's power, 8th Thermidor, 1794. All the victims are gallant or venerable or pathetic. The poet Chenier sits all alone in the middle, striking his forehead. "To die so young," he is recorded to have said, on mounting the scaffold; "there was something there!" At the right is another poet, Rouchet, author of *Les Mers*; he died singing, for he sent couplets to his family during the last hours of his prison life. Besides these advocates of royalty, are the people of quality whom they supported with their songs, but who perhaps hardly recognized them as their equals. Through the doorway is seen the Princess de Chimay, waving a distracted adieu as she ascends the tumbril; while the Princess de Monaco, as her name is read from the roll by Fouquier's messenger, and the knives of the informers and gendarmes point her out, rises and clutches her bosom with horror. A poor actress flings herself on the ground and tries to kiss the hand of the messenger of the tribunal—it is Mme. Leroy; a venerable widow sits collected and despairing; it is a marquise bearing the name of Colbert-Maulevriers. The officers of the king's army, doomed for defending him too bravely, go or prepare to go at the summons. Captain Aucaune, already called, embraces his family; the Marquis de Roquelaure broods in gallant fortitude, keeping up his military tenue even in the rush-chair of the close, stifling prison. All this, arranged with dramatic effectiveness, forms a rather strong indictment. The horrible egotism that had been the guiding rule of these interesting victims is almost forgotten; we see, with the painter, only charming women and intellectual poets in the royalists executed by the Republic. This painting was bought by Mr. Astor in 1876, at the sale of Mr. John Taylor Johnston's pictures, for \$8200. Mr. Johnston had given but \$1800 for it, in 1862, at one of Goupil's picture-auctions.

Gérôme's "Death of Cæsar," in this collection, is in some respects his best picture. It was painted in 1859 and measures about five feet by three. In some notes of his career written by himself, the artist has recently alluded to it as "the 'Death of Cæsar,' which certain amiable critics have christened 'The Washday.' I am no enemy to the sallies of wit, and for my own part I acknowledge and relish the comic side of the jest; but the composition, setting aside all modesty, deserves a more deliberate judgment. The presentment of the subject is dramatic and original. It is a small canvas, capable of being executed in ample scale without losing its character." It is in fact, simply and solely the one successful picture of this often-treated theme, reducing all other painters to vassalage to Gérôme, and particularly belittling the gaudy and confused treatment of the topic by Piloty. In this wonderful composition the artist succeeds in making a dramatic harmony, even of the tumult and confusion of such a catastrophe. The conspirators, sweeping off in a body, or rather pausing as they retire, form a white-robed group, like a pyramid of sculpture; the beautiful architecture of the curia, with its concentric sweep of classical chairs, occupies the eye with consoling suggestions of order and repose; the flying senators only agitate the distance; and the attention can collect itself with deliberate sadness for the contemplation of the wonderful figure of the dead dictator, lying alone and thoroughly noble in front. Over him towers the Pompey—not the Spada Pompey; I can never convince myself that the figure in that palace is the image before which Cæsar fell, because it bears the globe signifying world-wide commandment; the pride of Pompeius might have put up such an all-claiming image in some province, in Africa or Spain; but that Cæsar would have endured the figure of his rival so accoutred, in the very hall of his legislation, seems to surpass all belief. Pompey's soul, however, fills the house of death, as it filled the attention of the senators; for not only is his statue towering over the murdered triumvir, as Plutarch places it, but on the other side of the curule throne hang the galleys of the pirates whom Pompey had defeated, making cheap the Gallic shields and British wolf-skins with which Cæsar has decked the colon-

nades. The conspirators, lifting their swords, stimulate each other with a rapid password and prepare to go; only Brutus has the courage to turn and regard the body; in his ears still ring the words of reproach of him whom he believed to be his father—addressed, according to Plutarch's hardly credible account, in the Latin language. Cassius, with lowered sword, drives all before him like a flock; Casca is recognized by his naked leg, he having been deprived of his toga in the struggle. Mark Antony is of course not present, but on the senatorial seats lingers one Roman of convictions like Antony's, who sees but ruin and grief in the defeat of Cæsar. The body of the latter is one of the great feats of structural design in modern art, perhaps in art altogether. It is to be found also, studied up on the scale of nature, in the Corcoran Gallery at Washington, a proof of the conscientious care with which the painter prepares his subjects.

Hector Leroux, the painter of so many Vestals, having greatly pleased the wife of the proprietor by his erudition and urbanity during many European meetings, has been invited to place one of his largest pictures in the gallery. It is called "The School of the Vestals," and is a composition of some nine feet in breadth. It was first exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1880. In a semicircle of white-robed Vestals; the chief priestess mounts upon a bench to pour libations into the ever-burning tripod; on two chairs in front sit the priestesses selected for that night's watch, and whose responsibility it is to keep the ever-burning flame from expiring; the novices and devotees are ranged around, and a reader at the right proclaims the harsh laws of the temple from a scroll written with capital letters in early Roman style. The scene takes place in a rotunda, truly Roman in architecture, on whose niches are inscribed the names of families great in the Alban land before the crime of a Vestal gave being to Romulus.

Meissonier is represented by one of his very rare subjects containing a female figure. "Sur l'Escalier," the painting in question, shows us a glimpse of a wooden staircase in a French château, over which leans a gallant in the costume of Henri II. accompanied by a beautiful chatelaine. Roybet, in his brisk Franz Hals style, exhibits a table-scene with roystering men-at-arms; the picture may be called "Breaking up the Party," for one of the gay swashbucklers stands up and draws out his watch, of the pattern known to modern collectors as a Nuremberg Turnip. One of Kaemmerer's prettiest fancies is the "Return from the Baptism." It is a pleasant idea to put warm human feelings into that modish costume of the Directoire, generally known for its extravagance only, and judged from the caricatures of Carle Vernet. Here is a tender, lovely young mother, descending the church steps after the ceremony, and looking with a mother's watchfulness at the sleeping infant, whom a handsome nurse in high Norman cap is carrying; a sister distributes a bag of comfits to the street-crowd, and the old people follow from the church door in a vain-glorious procession. It had scarcely occurred to any painter to depict domestic feeling in these costumes dedicated to frivolity, until the present artist bethought him of the possibility. Edouard Frère, whose choice of pretty rustic subjects has given him a reputation slightly in advance of his merit, is seen with an unusually crowded theme, "The Drill"—a school of little boys being put through their exercises by a drill-sergeant in the public place of a village. By Vibert is seen an unusually serious topic, "The Sacred Concert." The contrast is piquant, however, of monastic dresses with Erard's most improved piano, and with the handsome pantaloons, just cut by Dusautoy, and varnished shoes of the pianist otherwise dressed in the ecclesiastical red robes of his order. The bass-viol player also wears red, and these two rubricated notes contrast with the white tone spread over the picture by the frocks of the Benedictines who form the choir. The painting, thus serious and without satire, is an uncommon production for Vibert; one would say he was repenting of his levities, and trying to be a Zamacois or a Steinheil.

Zamacois in person is seen in a superb example, "The Rival Confessors." His consummate knowledge of tone, values, and composition is displayed with the science of a master, while the sardonic triflingness of the topic awakes anew the feeling of wonder at the choice of theme of the modern Spanish school. No longer incited to decorate churches with pious subjects, as in the grand days of Spanish art, the painters of that nation are expressing the jests of a comic journal in the

great language committed to them by Ribera and Velasquez. Here we see, in a sarcastic antithesis, the indulgent confessor and the strict one, each niched in the wooden frame of his confessional. The head of the severe friar looks wrathfully out upon a space of utter solitude, while the precinct of the tolerant one is crowded with estimable bandits on their marrowbones. The grouping, the play of air and light, are magnificent, and the spectator who approaches to laugh remains to receive an artistic lesson worthy of Rembrandt.

The Italian modern school, so similar to the modern Spanish, and likewise based upon the Fortuny model, is seen in such examples as Rossi's "Old Age of a Prince." It is a crowded scene of glitter, at first view most like the spectrum of a kaleidoscope. A senile Italian prince sits on his throne in a room of state, and dames with towering powdered headdresses surround him, while a floral ballet of the Watteau taste is being performed in the palace. The shepherd has very broad hips, and is obviously a female, while the shepherdess unnecessarily spreads her skirts, already stretched to bursting by an enormous farthingale. On the throne-steps sits the prince-expectant, a meagre boy of twelve, dressed in satins like a Christmas doll, and receiving from the delicate spectacle his hopeful lesson in statecraft mitigated by voluptuousness. Also in the Italian group is Pagliano's "Examining the Legacy," a witty subject of modern belles turning over the embroideries of ancestral chests, and of bookworms examining the Elzevirs of an inherited library.

In the more serious French school is found Lefebvre's "Virginia." The figure is life-size and shows the fair girl sitting musing on the bulwarks of the vessel that is to bear her to shipwreck. The cordage of the ship embowers her figure with spider-work lines that etch themselves against the sky, against which her form of innocence and grace relieves itself, robed in the striped cotton stuffs of the tropics. Lefebvre's dilettante perfection and rather thin elegance are capitally developed in the figure. But it was surely a mistake of taste to paint the tell-tale "J. J. A." in immense capitals on a bale of goods at Virginia's feet. CICERONE.

#### GÉRÔME AS A DRAUGHTSMAN.

OUR readers probably know that we are not among those who consider Gérôme a genius. His pictures to us are generally exquisitely finished miniatures, cold and scholarly. But as a draughtsman it is impossible to deny him the highest rank. On this account his pencil sketches are of uncommon value to art students. His touch is so firm, so correct, that at first sight they seem like carefully finished drawings. Horace Vernet truly said of Gérôme that one could see a picture by him finished before he touched the canvas. The value of correct and vigorous drawing in a painting can hardly be overestimated, and it is a fortunate thing that some of our American artists have had the privilege of studying under such a master. Whatever could be learned of technical accuracy in color or drawing they could learn from him better, perhaps, than from any other painter of the day. Gérôme's work is so carefully finished that it will look well even under a magnifying-glass, and while it may well be doubted whether his figures could breathe in the airless world in which too often he creates them, it is hardly too much to say that as a painter of texture he has no superior. The great popularity of Gérôme's pictures in America is not surprising. His qualities are those easiest understood, and they are not unlike those which characterize the Düsseldorf school, once very popular in this country.

There is a large number of Gérôme's paintings in the United States. The "Pollice Verso," a scene of gladiatorial contest in the arena, is in the A. T. Stewart collection, where are also "Une Collaboration," representing Corneille and Molière writing together, and the famous "Chariot Race." Mr. John Jacob Astor possesses "The Death of Cæsar"; Mr. Theron R. Butler owns "The Bull Fighter," "The Guard of Louis XIV.," and "The Keeper of the Hounds"; "Cæsar Dead" is in the Corcoran gallery. Miss Catherine L. Wolfe owns "The Interior of a Mosque," crowded with Arabs. Mr. John Hoey has the "Almeh" and the "Egyptian Butcher"; Mr. W. B. Dinsmore the "Death in Arms"; Mr. J. H. Stebbins, "Molière Breakfasting with Louis XIV.," and Mr. J. L. Mott, the "Interior of a Persian Inn." The "Diogenes" is in the celebrated Walters gallery in Baltimore.